

Stream: Culture/Politics/Technology, 6(1)
<http://journals.sfu.ca/cpt/index.php/stream/index>

MA Defence: “Sub-elites as fiduciary gatekeepers of global elites: A fiscal anthropology of the Cayman Islands and offshore financial industry”

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Our dear colleague, May Hen, successfully defended her MA thesis on November 25, 2014. Here is the abstract of her thesis “Sub-elites as fiduciary gatekeepers of global elites: A fiscal anthropology of the Cayman Islands and offshore financial industry”.

Abstract

The Cayman Islands facilitate some of the largest international financial flows. Despite international pressures, they continue to service international networks of corporations and wealthy elites unperturbed. Few ethnographic studies of offshore financial centers exist because of the private nature of their professionals who uphold strict codes of confidentiality. This thesis describes the sub-elite professional operators of the Cayman Islands and explains the Island’s transition from a modest maritime economy to one of the most powerful finance-based economies in the world. In exchange for material success, the Cayman Islands has sequestered its indigenous populations’ identity in favour of a stronger, prestigious and more unified identity as an international offshore financial center. Through ethnography, I delineate how sub-elites have carefully orchestrated the Islands’ development to their interests and manipulated its political economy by re-framing indigenous Caymanian people as myopic, therefore silencing their voices, undermining their citizenship, and de-legitimizing their claim to their Island’s own self-governance.

Keywords

Caribbean elites, Durable inequality, Sub-elites, Offshore financial center, Caribbean, Cayman Islands, Communication